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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000175

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TAGS: PGOV EAID KDEM PREL SOCI IV  
SUBJECT: IDENTIFICATION/VOTER REGISTRATION EXTENDED

REF: A. ABIDJAN 71  
1B. ABIDJAN 66

Classified By: PolEcon Chief Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The identification/voter registration process has been extended until March 30 in some regions and until early April for those persons affected by the reconstitution of civil registries. Identification/voter registration of Ivoirians living in 19 foreign countries began on March 15. Despite political parties' allegations of fraud, Carter Center teams monitoring the process found little evidence of this on the ground. However, Carter Center representatives expressed concerns about the slow movement to set a new date for elections. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Prime Minister's Office and the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) issued a joint statement on March 15 informing Ivoirians that the identification/voter registration process would be extended in certain locations by 7 to 15 days from March 15 in order to give each Ivoirian the opportunity to obtain a national identity card and participate in the next election. The process will be extended by 15 days in the 850 registration centers located nationwide that have not yet become operational. The process will be extended by 7 days in villages where the process began but was not completed. In cities and urban districts where the process is ongoing, local CEI officials and representatives of other agencies involved in the process will select 2 teams that will work for 15 days.

¶3. (SBU) As part of a project financed by the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom, the Carter Center has deployed teams throughout the country to observe the identification/voter registration process (Reftel B). Carter Center Cote d'Ivoire representative Sabina Vigani told the Ambassador on March 10 that prosecutors have informed Carter Center teams that there have been few cases of fraud despite political parties' accusations to the contrary. Vigani did note that in the western areas of the country members of student group FESCI and the Young Patriots militia have been accusing persons attempting to register to vote of being foreigners.

¶4. (U) Identification/voter registration of Ivoirians living overseas began on March 15. The CEI will deploy teams to 19 countries to register a total of approximately 68,000 Ivoirians. Selection criteria was reportedly those countries with the largest populations of expatriate Ivoirians. The countries are: Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Italy, Mali, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In the United States, Ivoirians will be able to register to vote in three locations: Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC.

¶5. (SBU) Once the identification/voter registration process is finished, a preliminary voters' list will be published. Members of the international community have told Emboff that the list could be ready around July if the current deadlines for the identification process are respected. Before its

publication, however, the names on the list are to be cross-checked with existing national records. No agreement has yet been reached on what records will be consulted. Given the sensitivities regarding nationality, it will be no easy task to have all political parties reach consensus on this issue and a delay in the publication of the list is possible.

¶6. (C) Many in the international community have been critical of the decision to register Ivoirians overseas because of the cost involved. In fact, the CEI's priorities are a recurrent source of friction with donors. A member of the EU Mission told Emboff that the EU has not disbursed funding available for the identification process because the CEI wants to use it for salaries, per diem, and vehicles for its headquarters staff while CEI local staff throughout the country have not been paid in months. According to the EU diplomat, French company Sagem, which will produce the identification and voter registration cards, makes payments (presumably to cover staff salaries and operating costs on the ground) to an Ivoirian company owned by Ibrahima Ba, who is in charge of the Working Group on Identification at the Prime Minister's Office. The EU diplomat alleged that only a small portion of Sagem's funds are then passed on to the field.

¶7. (C) The Carter Center remains concerned by the delays in establishing a new date for elections as reported in reftel ¶B. Vigani told the Ambassador that the Carter Center is considering sending a high-level delegation to meet with Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore in his capacity as Facilitator of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) to discuss what actions he believes would be helpful to move the

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process forward. Ambassador told Vigani that Embassy is also concerned about the repeated delays in the election process and would be happy to work with the Carter Center (to the extent possible) to push things forward.

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